

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine

Professional Code of Conduct for Student Veterinary Surgeons

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Version 1.0

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¹ Internal consultation with other departments within the University should be noted

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Policy Author:	Veterinary Medicine Programme Development Lead

Policy Management Framework Compliance Review as requested by EMT all draft policies should be reviewed by the Policy Review Group ² in advance of review by EMT. Please confirm that the policy was reviewed by the policy review group.	
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1. Introduction/Context

SETU is committed to excellence in all aspects of teaching and research and has established this Code of Conduct to ensure that Veterinary Medicine Students are aware of their responsibilities and understand that working as a veterinary professional carries significant responsibilities and accountability. This is to ensure safe, legal, evidence-based, and ethical practice to the highest professional standards. The public, clients, animal owners, and the wider profession trust veterinary professionals because of these standards. The protection of animal welfare is also a pivotal aspect of the role of the veterinary surgeon. Each qualified veterinary practitioner in Ireland must abide by the Veterinary Council of Ireland (VCI) Code of Professional Conduct, which outlines the professional principles, standards, and ethical behaviours expected in veterinary practice.

Students on SETU's Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme are required to abide by the [SETU Student Charter](#) and this SETU Professional Code of Conduct for Veterinary Medicine Students. This document is informed by the VCI Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Surgeons and is aligned with SETU's policies and procedures across healthcare and professional programmes. SETU is committed to delivering veterinary education programmes that reflect the highest standards of professional veterinary medical training. All students of the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine are required to complete a Garda Vetting Application Form and receive Garda clearance before engaging in clinical intra-mural rotations, extra mural placements or external visits.

Upon successful completion of the veterinary medicine programme, and successful achievement of all Veterinary Council of Ireland/European Association for Establishments of Veterinary Education Day One Competences for Veterinary Surgeons, graduates will be eligible to join the Veterinary Council of Ireland's Register of Veterinary Surgeons. SETU has a duty of care to protect animal welfare, the public and the veterinary profession by setting and upholding clear standards for education and professional conduct, and by taking appropriate action if a veterinary student's fitness to practise is called into question. During their education programme, the veterinary medicine student is expected to uphold and display professional standards of behaviour and attitude, which must be displayed within SETU, outside of the University and in all professional and clinical settings. The term professional and clinical settings include, but is not limited to, intra-mural rotations/extra-mural placement in a veterinary practice/hospital, farms/agriculture/animal husbandry setting, laboratories or public health facility, which has been arranged by the University or the student. It also includes any visits, tours or activities organised by the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme team or University.

2. Purpose and Scope

This SETU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Professional Code of Conduct for Student Veterinary Surgeons sets out standards, which students must follow in academic, clinical and professional settings and when interacting with teaching and research staff, students, tutors, patients, clients and any other member of the public. SETU takes any breach of this Code very seriously. If standards are not abided by the matter will be referred to the SETU Fitness to Practise Policy and Department of Veterinary

Medicine Fitness to Practise procedures or SETU disciplinary procedures as required. The SETU Fitness to Practise policy and Department of Veterinary Medicine Fitness to Practise procedures and further SETU policies outlining this, can be found on the Virtual Learning Environment in the Department of Veterinary Medicine, within the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Information Area and will be outlined at induction each Year. This Code of Conduct is underpinned and supported by the [SETU Student Expected Behaviour Policy and Disciplinary Policy](#), [SETU Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedure](#), [SETU Supporting and Determining Students Fitness in Continue Study](#) - Policy and Procedure and Garda Vetting procedures. It is also linked to Department of Veterinary Medicine Health and Safety procedures within the Faculty of Science and Computing, and the SETU Fitness to Practise Policy and Department of Veterinary Medicine Fitness to Practise Procedures.

This SETU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Professional Code of Conduct for Student Veterinary Surgeons must be formally agreed to by each student each year and forms part of evidence of fitness to practice. It shall be made available and published publicly *via* the University website and available for students in their handbook.

3. Principles

The [VCI Code of Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners](#) has been structured around eight chapters based on the values at the core of the veterinary profession. These values for veterinary surgeons are outlined below. This SETU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine Professional Code of Conduct for Student Veterinary Surgeons is set out to align with each chapter. An explanation of each principle adapted from the VCI Code of Conduct or Veterinary Surgeons, is presented, and this is related to the requirements of students of the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine.

VCI Code of Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners (2021)

Chapter	Definition
<i>One: Professionalism</i>	<i>“Maintaining public trust and confidence in the veterinary professions by acting with integrity in all professional interactions”</i>
<i>Two: Competent and Appropriate Veterinary Care</i>	<i>“Providing competent and appropriate veterinary care”</i>
<i>Three: Animal Health and Welfare</i>	<i>“Enhancing animal health and welfare”</i>
<i>Four: Protection of Society</i>	<i>“Promoting measures to protect public health and safety, animal health and welfare in society, the environment, and food supply”</i>

<i>Five: Responsible Use of Medicinal Products in Animals</i>	<i>“Acting prudently to ensure the responsible use of medicinal products in animals”</i>
<i>Six: Respect, Fairness and Co-Operation</i>	<i>“Demonstrating respect, fairness and co-operation towards clients, colleagues and society”</i>
<i>Seven: Communication, Confidentiality and Consent</i>	<i>“Communicating effectively with clients, colleagues, team members and the public, recognising their wishes, ensuring adequate consent, and protecting confidentiality”</i>
<i>Eight: Integrity of Veterinary Certification</i>	<i>“Upholding the integrity of veterinary certification”</i>

Figure 1: Chapter reproduced from the VCI Code of Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners (2021)

4. Definitions

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct:

MVB Programme - SETU's 5-year Veterinary Medicine programme

VCI - Veterinary Council of Ireland; The Irish Veterinary Medicine regulatory body whose principal function is regulation of the practise of veterinary medicine and veterinary nursing, to include accreditation of veterinary education programmes, in Ireland, in the interest of animal health and welfare, and public health.

EAEVE - European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education; Veterinary education accreditation body which represents and supports its member establishments within Europe and globally, to drive the harmonization of a research-based veterinary education and its constant evolution in the context of societal challenges. The VCI adapts EAEVE’s accreditation standards with 5 additional addenda relevant to the Irish veterinary context.

IMR - Intra Mural Rotations; Clinical rotations within the Distributed Clinical Network organised by SETU; core aspect of the MVB programme curriculum.

EMS - Extra Mural Studies; External practical training which is a required aspect of the programme in line with the 1st VCI Addenda; intended to compliment the primary MVB curriculum by enabling further development of students’ veterinary skills and knowledge.

Safeguarding - Policies, procedures, and practices that protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals, especially children and vulnerable adults, to ensure they are kept safe from harm, abuse, exploitation, or neglect.

Cascade - A mechanism provided for in legislation designed to deal with situations where there is no authorised product to treat a particular condition in an animal (as defined by the Veterinary Council of Ireland).

One Health - An approach that recognises that the health of people is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment. It aims to unite veterinary practitioners, veterinary nurses, physicians and other science, health and environmental professionals, as well as farmers and/ or custodians of the land, in a collaborative effort (as defined by the Veterinary Council of Ireland).

One Welfare - An extension of the One Health approach that recognises the interconnection between animal welfare, human wellbeing, and the environment (as defined by the Veterinary Council of Ireland).

Antibiotic Stewardship - The responsible and evidence-based use of antimicrobials to minimise the development of resistance and safeguard public and animal health.

Biosecurity - A set of preventive measures designed to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases, pests, or contaminants among animals, humans, and the environment.

Zoonotic Diseases - Diseases that can be transmitted between animals and humans.

5. Policy

The following professional principles or chapters must be upheld by all Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine students.

5.1 *Professionalism*

Veterinary surgeons must act with compassion, discernment, trustworthiness, integrity and conscientiousness in all professional interactions so that the public can have trust and confidence in the veterinary professions. It is of fundamental importance that people can trust that veterinary surgeons will carry out their role in a way that reflects the values of the veterinary professions. During veterinary education, students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme must therefore conduct themselves in a professional manner in their approach and completion of their education. This is within the University, outside and in all professional, learning and placement activities.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Commit to their learning, foster deep learning and application of skills and knowledge.
2. Recognise the privilege and responsibility of working with animals and their owners.
3. Uphold principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion by treating all individuals with dignity and respect, actively challenging discrimination, and contributing to a learning and working environment that is inclusive, fair, and representative of all communities.

4. Manage their time, planning for and engaging in assessments, completing and submitting assignments on time, and with the highest standards of integrity.
5. Abide and follow clearly the University, Faculty of Science and Computing Health and Safety and Department of Veterinary Medicine Health and Safety procedures.
6. Manage their health and wellbeing, seeking support if necessary.
7. Declare any conflict of interest.
8. Abide by SETU electronic communication policies, communicating with staff, tutors and fellow students in a professional and personal capacity appropriately and responsibly. The students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme should protect their identity online. The student must carefully consider their online profile.
9. Responsibly use social media sites, having due regard to the rights and reputation of SETU, placement sites, and others. The students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme must not bring SETU, any partner practices or placement providers or themselves into disrepute through their use of social media.
10. Adhere to the dress code required, for University teaching activities and professional environments.
11. Understand that dishonesty, indecency, harassment, bullying, violence, and abuse of drugs or alcohol will lead to disciplinary action.
12. Obey the law and inform the University immediately if you are the subject of criminal legal proceedings.

5.2 *Competent and Appropriate Veterinary Care, and Animal Health and Welfare*

Veterinary surgeons have a duty to prioritise animal welfare, recognising animals as sentient beings. They must use their scientific knowledge to ensure care addresses animal needs, client expectations, and public health. Treatment should be informed by knowledge of the animal's history and environment. Veterinary surgeons must take all reasonable steps to relieve pain and suffering and discuss euthanasia when an animal's condition causes unavoidable distress. Beyond individual care, veterinary surgeons should advocate for improved welfare standards and legislation, supporting a One Health approach. They are responsible for both implementing current standards and contributing to their continual advancement in a changing society.

SETU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine students must uphold the same ethos, understand this key responsibility, work to build core knowledge and skills and embody professional requirements

necessary to become a veterinary surgeon. This holds in both University studies and all professional intra-mural rotations, placements and visits. The welfare of the animal is always paramount.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Commit to building their Day One Competences (knowledge, skills and behaviours) and Underpinning Knowledge and Understanding during their studies, taking responsibility for their work and understand the impact of their work in practice to ensure the animals and clients receive safe and effective care.
2. Attend lectures, tutorials, and placement in accordance with the SETU MVB attendance procedures. 100% attendance is required during intra-mural rotations during final year in line with regulatory requirements. The Department of Veterinary Medicine will facilitate alternative arrangements should students be unable to complete an element of the intra-mural rotations for any reason, such as temporarily switching rotation group in order to facilitate completing the rotation later in the year or working with the student in order to make reasonable adjustments. 80% attendance is required at all practical classes (including laboratory based, clinical skills and farm based).
3. Not disrupt the learning experience of fellow students during lectures, seminars, skills, and practice placements.
4. Behave in a responsible, trustworthy and professional way.
5. Always prioritise the health, welfare, and ethical treatment of animals under their care or observation while complying with animal welfare legislation.
6. Follow all client/animal interaction protocols during University work, intra-mural rotations and extra-mural placement. These include consent, professional confidentiality, personal data and records.
7. Raise any issues of concern with academic staff, supervisors, preceptors and tutors, which would compromise or affect student welfare, animal welfare or care including suspected animal abuse or neglect.

5.3 Protection of Society

One Health is a collaborative approach recognising the interconnected health of people, animals, and the environment. Veterinary surgeons play a key role by applying their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to promote animal and public health, while protecting ecosystems. They must think globally and work alongside other health, environmental, and agricultural professionals to address disease threats and improve overall wellbeing. Effective communication, understanding epidemiology, and recognising public health risks from animal husbandry are essential.

One Welfare extends this concept, emphasising the link between animal welfare, human wellbeing, and environmental sustainability. Veterinarians must minimise environmental impact through responsible use of resources and chemicals. The VCI also acknowledges connections between animal abuse, domestic violence, and mental health, and provides guidance to support veterinary surgeons in addressing these complex issues while maintaining their primary responsibility to animals ([Appendix IV: One Welfare Guidance Note - Child Abuse, Domestic Violence and Mental Health of VCI Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners](#)).

SETU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine students are expected to develop the knowledge, values, and behaviours that support multidisciplinary collaboration, sustainable practice, and the protection of public and animal health.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Recognise the link between animal, human, and environmental health, welfare and well-being, and the role of veterinary professionals in protecting all three.
2. Participate in public health initiatives and opportunities in the programme and the University, in collaboration with students and staff of other healthcare programmes.
3. Adhere to biosecurity standard operating procedures and contribute to infection control during all University work, extra-mural placements and intra-mural rotations.
4. Use resources like water, energy, and chemicals responsibly and sustainably, and consider the environmental impact of veterinary actions.
5. Be aware of links between animal abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse, and report safeguarding concerns appropriately (refer to [SETU Child Protection Policy](#)).

5.4 Responsible Use of Medicinal Products in Animals

Veterinary surgeons are responsible for ensuring medicinal products for animals are used responsibly. This responsibility encompasses legal, ethical, and clinical obligations designed to protect animal welfare, public health, and environmental safety. Prudent prescribing practices, supported by thorough clinical assessments and accurate documentation, are essential. Veterinary surgeons are required to have a thorough understanding of legislative frameworks such as Regulation (EU) 2019/6, the correct use of the 'cascade', and the significance of antimicrobial stewardship. Furthermore, veterinary surgeons must ensure secure storage and disposal of medicines, report adverse events and provide informed client guidance, all of which uphold professional standards of veterinary care.

SETU Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine students are expected to develop the knowledge and skills required to ensure correct, safe use of medicinal products in animals for the protection of animal welfare and public health.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Maintain comprehensive and accurate records of the storage, prescribing, use and stock levels of animal medicines while on intra-mural rotations and extra mural placements in line with Partner Practice/EMS provider's local SOPs.
2. Follow all medicine related protocols including handling, storage and disposal protocols during University work, intra-mural rotations and extra mural placements.

5.5 *Respect, Fairness and Co-Operation*

Veterinary professionals are expected to hold informed views on animal health and welfare while engaging respectfully with those of differing opinions. They must act fairly and without discrimination. Collaboration is key—veterinary surgeons work with multidisciplinary teams and clients to provide safe, evidence-based care focused on animal welfare and the One Health approach. This collaborative ethos extends to veterinary education, where students are expected to work with fellow students, academic staff, partner practices, placement providers, and preceptors. To meet the demands of professional practice, students must actively develop strong communication and teamwork skills throughout their training and contribute positively to collaborative learning environments.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Learn and build their communication skills to ensure they work effectively within multidisciplinary teams and communicate clearly with clients and the public.
2. Respect staff, fellow students, preceptors, placement providers, clients, and all other individuals, always acting in a polite, honest and professional manner in all communications.
3. Listen to others' opinions and insight without judgement.
4. Respect the skills and knowledge of lecturers, collaborators, supervisors, academic staff, and academic tutors.
5. Work to clearly understand the scope of veterinary first opinion practice and where the need for other specialist care is required for the patient.
6. Never discriminate against clients, academic staff, fellow students or others on the basis of gender, religion, age, civil status and family status, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or membership of the Travelling community.
7. Recognise the importance of their own health and how it impacts others.
8. Take responsibility for their work, individually and in group situations.
9. Follow all SOPs and procedures within the programme.
10. Seek support and appropriate professional advice if issues arise with their physical or mental health, or any other personal issues, which could impact the ability to study and practice.

5.6 *Communication, Confidentiality and Consent*

Veterinary surgeons must communicate clearly, honestly, and respectfully with clients, providing accurate and comprehensive information about an animal's condition, treatment options, and likely outcomes. They should listen carefully, ask relevant questions, and use written materials such as care plans where appropriate. Effective communication with colleagues and staff is also essential to ensure coordinated care. Confidentiality is vital: client information must be kept secure, shared only with consent, and all staff and students must be made aware of its confidential nature.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Listen to academic staff, fellow students, tutors, preceptors and partner practice/placement provider staff in a respectful way.
2. Work to develop their communication skills during clinical skills and laboratory practicals, collaborative learning activities, intra-mural rotations and research.
3. Take on board any feedback from peers, academics, and intra-mural rotation/placement staff, learning from mistakes and feedback on performance.
4. Disclose to University staff or placement supervisors any issues affecting ability to study or practice effectively.
5. Follow all client/animal interaction protocols during University work, intra-mural rotations and extra-mural placement. These include consent, professional confidentiality, personal data and records.
6. Respect confidentiality in all forms with respect to educational, professional and clinical settings and most importantly patient and client care. This includes documentation, interviews, media and social media (Refer to [SETU Data Protection Policy](#)).

5.7 Integrity of Veterinary Certification

A veterinary certificate is a written, printed, or electronic declaration of fact issued with authority and signed by the issuer (registered veterinary surgeon), regardless of whether the term 'certificate' is used. Veterinary certification may involve confirming an animal's health or welfare status, or the safety of animal-derived products—such as in cases involving notifiable or zoonotic diseases, rabies control, pet travel, or food safety. Veterinary surgeons are responsible for upholding the integrity of veterinary certificates by adhering to the 11 Principles of Veterinary Certification to ensure accuracy, responsibility, and professional standards. In line with these principles, students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme are expected to behave in an honest and truthful manner in line with throughout their veterinary education.

Each Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine student at SETU must therefore:

1. Maintain and complete their reflective tasks, extra-mural study records and final year portfolio truthfully and honestly.
2. Abide by University, Faculty and Department Policy, and lecturer guidelines on the use of Generative AI or other platforms in assignments. Cite appropriately academic sources, paraphrasing and applying best practise in academic writing, following SETU Policy on Academic Integrity.
3. Accurately, truthfully and honestly collate data from clinical skills and laboratory practicals, collaborative learning activities, intra-mural rotations and research work, applying best practice in data management, representation of results and reporting.
4. Never falsify the signatures of others on any documentation.

6. Responsibility and Authority

The Department of Veterinary Medicine will ensure that students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme are provided with a supportive and student-centred, professional learning environment for their education at SETU. This will ensure they are provided with the knowledge, skills and values needed to graduate as competent veterinary surgeons.

The Department will therefore ensure:

1. There are mechanisms in place to support students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme who have difficulty in achieving professional standards in their veterinary education programme.
2. The Department will foster a supportive culture with a growth mind-set.
3. All students on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme records are held at South

East Technological University in line with the [Freedom of Information Act 1997](#), the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 and [SETU Student Privacy Notice](#). Confidentiality will be maintained. No disclosure of information will be made outside that necessary for the administration of the student on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programmes progress in the programme and programme legal registration and accreditation requirements. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality in the processing and investigation of any complaint or issue raised.

7. Student Acceptance of Code of Conduct

When a student is successful in obtaining a place in an MVB programme, they must sign that they have read, understood and agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct and SETU's Student Charter. The programme director will collate these forms which will be stored by the Department of Veterinary Medicine in line with GDPR requirements. The student on the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine programme must sign that they agree to adhere to these standards each year of the veterinary medicine programme and strictly abide by the standards throughout the programme. Any observed breaches of this code must be reported to the Head of Department, programme director or placement personnel.

8. Compliance

It is expected that all students of the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine of the University will comply with this Code of Conduct.

9. Related Documents and References

1. [VCI Code of Professional Conduct for Veterinary Practitioners](#)
2. SETU Faculty of Science and Computing and Department of Veterinary Medicine Health and Safety Procedures.
3. SETU Faculty of Science & Computing Academic Integrity Training Programme
4. SETU Fitness to Practise Policy and Department of Veterinary Medicine Procedures
5. [SETU Student Expected Behaviour Policy and Disciplinary Policy](#)
6. [SETU Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Disciplinary Procedure](#)
7. [SETU Supporting and Determining Students Fitness in Continue Study](#) - Policy and Procedure
8. [SETU Student Charter](#)
9. [SETU Student Privacy Notice](#)
10. [SETU Data Protection Policy](#)
11. [SETU Child Protection Policy](#)

10. Review of Policy

This policy will be reviewed in advance of the review date i.e. day month year, and/or as soon as possible following new or updated legislation, national or sectoral policy.

11. Policy Author

The authors of this policy are the Veterinary Medicine Programme Development Lead, Development team and Department of Veterinary Medicine. Any feedback or issues arising on implementation of this policy should be communicated to the policy authors. They are responsible to ensure that the Policy Owner is aware of these comments when reviewing the document.